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Report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund

Summary

The present report has been prepared in conformity with a joint format agreed by the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Children's Fund, covering the issues identified in consultations among United Nations Development Group members. The report addresses the implementation of the reform programme of the Secretary-General and the provisions of the triennial comprehensive policy review as well as the follow-up to international conferences and the Millennium Development Goals.

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I. Implementation of the reform programme of the Secretary-General and the provisions of the triennial comprehensive policy review

A. Funding for operational activities for development

1. In early 2002, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) faced a critical situation with regard to regular resources, due to the withdrawal of a projected contribution of $34 million from a major donor and decreases in contributions from 2001 levels by two other donors. This resulted in a projected shortfall of 20 per cent of total resources. Additional contributions from major donors as well as contributions from an increasing number of programme countries helped to mitigate the situation. Additional contributions from several major donors amounted to $18.8 million in 2002. As a result, the total regular contribution income for 2002 was $260.1 million, a decrease of only $8.5 million, or 3.2 per cent, from the 2001 level of $268.6 million.

2. Also noteworthy in 2002 was the expansion of the UNFPA donor base, which reached an all-time high of 135 donors, surpassing the 2001 level of 120 donors. The increase in the number of countries contributing to UNFPA demonstrates growing political support for the work of the Fund and is a direct response to Executive Board decision 98/24. This decision recognized that overdependence on a limited number of donors posed a risk for the long-term financial sustainability of the Fund and urged donors and programme countries to increase their contributions to core resources. The breakdown of donors by region is as follows: 36 from Africa; 33 from Asia and the Pacific; 32 from Europe; 20 from Latin America and the Caribbean; 13 from the Arab States and one from North America.

3. Within the context of the multi-year funding framework, UNFPA sought to obtain multi-year pledges to ensure greater stability and predictability of the Fund's resources. While UNFPA was gratified that a few of its major donors have been able to provide multi-year pledges, the majority of the top donors of the Fund have not been able to do so. Only 30 of 136 donors in 2002 made multi-year pledges. Of those 30, only six were major donors.

4. Contributions to other resources ($109.5 million) were provided through trust funds ($56.7 million), cost-sharing programme arrangements ($43.9 million) and other arrangements ($8.9 million). Contributions to other resources ($109.5 million) decreased approximately 11.3 per cent, compared to 2001 ($123.5 million). Interest income and other income of $3.5 million brought the total income for other resources in 2002 to $113 million. The trend in other resources has become more important during recent years. However, UNFPA does not expect to attain as high a level of other resources in 2003.

5. UNFPA has continued to experience strong momentum for resource mobilization for its regular resources base in 2003. As of 10 December 2003, total regular contributions amount to $294.0 million, a projected increase of 13.0 per cent from the 2002 actual regular income of $260.1 million. Once again, there has been a significant increase in the UNFPA donor base, which reached 140 donor governments as of 10 December 2003, surpassing the total of 135 donors in 2002. UNFPA still expects a number of pledges and it is possible that it will exceed the 140 mark by the end of the year.

6. Regarding financial support from individuals, the 34 Million Friends Campaign has been unparalleled. UNFPA coordinated and facilitated the 34 Million Friends Campaign and has processed and responded to over 100,000 letters and private donations from individuals. The appeal has been circulated extensively through a variety of private networks and has been widely reported by the media. As of 10 December 2003, $1.2 million from the 34 Million Friends Campaign was deposited to the UNFPA account.

7. As of 10 December 2003, the preliminary income forecast for regular resources in 2004 indicates a 7 per cent increase from the projected 2003 level of $294 million to approximately $315.5 million. Total resources, including contributions to co-financing programmes, may reach nearly $400 million in 2004.

B. Common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework

8. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) common country assessment/United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) working group revised the 2002 common country assessment/UNDAF guidelines, incorporating new, harmonized programming tools such as the UNDAF results matrix, joint strategy meetings and the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation plans. In addition, the link between common country assessments and UNDAFs and national planning processes and frameworks, such as poverty reduction strategies, was further clarified and strengthened. The UNDG programme group approved the revised UNDAF guidelines in June 2003 and the revised common country assessment guidelines in October 2003. UNFPA was one of the lead UNDG agencies in this exercise.

9. In 2003, UNDG agencies in 19 programme countries embarked on the common country assessment and UNDAF processes, as the first step in achieving harmonized programming cycles. Almost half of these countries were in Europe and in the Commonwealth of Independent States. The UNDG Office and the UNFPA country technical services teams provided substantive support to UNFPA country offices in these programme countries. In addition, the quality support and assurance system developed in 2002 was approved and implemented in 2003. In cooperation with the regional bureaux of other UNDG agencies, the UNFPA country technical services team in Harare coordinated quality support and technical backstopping to the United Nations country teams in Madagascar and Zimbabwe. The new quality support and assurance system can become a highly effective way of providing coordinated support and guidance to United Nations country teams.

C. Simplification and harmonization of rules and procedures

10. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 56/201 and the second wave of reform of the United Nations Secretary-General, considerable progress has been made in simplifying and harmonizing programme and operational procedures. UNDG adopted a number of tools and had them incorporated into the revised common country assessment/UNDAF guidelines, which the UNDG programme group recently approved. These include common terminology for results-based

management, the UNDAF results matrix, the joint strategy meeting, the UNDAF monitoring and evaluation plan, and the UNDAF evaluation.

11. In November 2002, the executive heads of the four UNDG executive committee agencies adopted a number of tools related to programme preparation, approval and development to be introduced when countries prepare their harmonized country programmes, which are based on the common country assessment and UNDAF. A meeting was held in New York in April 2003 to introduce new tools to the five common country assessment/UNDAF roll-out countries (Benin, Ecuador, Kenya, Niger and Pakistan).

12. In addition to the five countries beginning harmonized programme cycles in 2004, staff from the 19 countries beginning new programme cycles in 2005 were trained on the common country assessment/UNDAF processes. The United Nations System Staff College, the UNDG Office and resource persons from the UNDG agencies conducted the training.

13. Work on other programme implementation modalities is ongoing, including the preparation of a revised guidance note on joint programming that will provide programmatic and operational guidance and ensure that joint programming is at the core of the in-country programming process. An inter-agency working group was established for this purpose, under the chairmanship of UNFPA. Financial and legal experts from various agencies were involved in this effort.

14. UNDG will issue a revised guidance note on joint programming in early 2004, to be incorporated in agency programming manuals. Plans are also under way to incorporate joint programming into training plans for country offices and relevant divisions at UNFPA headquarters. The following principles have guided the work on joint programming: (a) Governments and governmental priorities set the context; (b) procedures are guided by country situations rather than a one-size-fits-all approach; (c) national ownership is key; (d) United Nations agencies will rely on improved national systems and assist in building capacity where needed; and (e) current best practices from the United Nations funds and programmes will be used.

D. Monitoring and evaluation

15. In 2002, UNFPA strengthened its capacity in results-based monitoring and evaluation practices by preparing and disseminating tools for the programme managers' tool kit, the translation of these tools into United Nations working languages and the organization of the fifth and last in a series of programme management workshops for country office staff and country technical services team advisers. The workshop promoted better understanding of the principles and requirements of results-based office and programme management and provided an opportunity to share lessons learned. In addition, UNFPA intensified collaboration with selected country offices in developing and strengthening their monitoring and evaluation systems and in monitoring their application. The results of this initiative will be used to develop tools and guidelines.

16. To promote the institutionalization of a results-based programme management approach, UNFPA issued revised reporting formats in 2001. In 2002, UNFPA conducted a survey of country offices to determine the use of these formats and

gauge their utility from a user's perspective. Overall, the formats were well received. Country offices noted that the revised formats promoted a more critical analysis of project progress and were useful for project staff to closely monitor implementation in order to inform decision-making.

17. A number of country offices made useful suggestions for improving the formats which, along with the outcome of the UNDG inter-agency harmonization and simplification initiative to streamline approaches to programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, will serve as valuable inputs to the preparation of revised monitoring and evaluation guidelines to be completed in 2003. UNFPA is an active member of the UNDG working group on monitoring and evaluation.

18. The UNFPA evaluation network held its fourth annual meeting to review progress achieved since its inception and to develop a 2002 work plan. Members concluded that the network is a useful mechanism to promote results-based monitoring and evaluation and to share experiences. UNFPA also organized an internal seminar on evaluation methodologies for network members.

19. Throughout 2002, UNFPA country technical services teams led several capacity-building exercises to strengthen country-level, results-oriented monitoring and evaluation. Workshops were organized for country office staff and national counterparts to develop their capacity to select appropriate indicators, identify reliable sources of data and design data-collection methods. Training sessions also focused on developing programme logical frameworks, project work plans, and monitoring and evaluation plans. In addition, country technical services teams provided technical assistance in conceptualizing and designing common database systems that incorporate national priorities, the Millennium Development Goals, UNDAFs, poverty reduction strategy papers and International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) goals. These developments are expected to improve the monitoring of poverty, better target the poor and track achievement of ICPD goals.

20. In spite of increasing awareness and commitment to the principles of results-based management and monitoring and evaluation in UNFPA, there is a lack of a common understanding of how to operationalize a results-based approach to programming. The capacity to undertake causality analysis and understand the different levels of results, and the logical relationship that exists between them, must be strengthened. Systems for data collection and analysis, including national systems, also need to be developed. In most countries, limited availability of information and systems to generate data still represents a major stumbling block. Capacity-building in this area will require the engagement of other partners. In addition, an appreciation for the important contribution monitoring and evaluation activities can make to improving programme design and programme management, decision-making and to generating knowledge and learning needs to be further cultivated.

E. Capacity-building

21. Building the capacity of developing countries to achieve their goals in reproductive health and rights, population, gender and development is at the core of the UNFPA mandate. Since its inception, UNFPA has given great importance to capacity-building. In 2002-2003, the Fund took steps to examine its current

approaches to capacity-building and to further strengthen them, in light of evaluation findings and the challenges posed by the ICPD Programme of Action, the Millennium Development Goals and results-based management.

22. According to the findings of the UNFPA thematic evaluation on capacity-building, the Fund needs to reorient its approach to capacity-building. It is clear from the study that the focus of UNFPA funding for capacity-building has centred on three areas: equipment and infrastructure; training; and personnel. It also confirmed that although the Fund's past efforts contributed to capacity-building in some areas, a more rigorous and systematic approach was required for the future.

23. Based on the recommendations of the evaluation, UNFPA is embarking on a work programme that will: (a) develop an organizational definition of capacity and capacity-building in view of the new strategic direction of the Fund; (b) identify strategies and major capacity-building results to be achieved through UNFPA programmes; (c) formulate approaches to collaborate with other donors, including United Nations agencies; and (d) strengthen internal expertise in capacity-building.

24. Given the central importance of capacity-building in the development cooperation activities of all United Nations agencies and the commitment of the United Nations system to building national capacity in developing countries, UNFPA looks forward to collaborating with other agencies in addressing this important issue.

F. Gender

25. During the reporting period, major achievements included the development of a conceptual framework on a human rights-based approach to programming and a guidance note on culturally sensitive programming approaches. Together with work on the linkages between culture, gender and human rights, they will lay the groundwork for strengthening these linkages in implementing the new intercountry programme, 2004-2007. The human rights-based approach task force undertook its work as a follow-up to the 2002 review on the extent to which country offices and country technical services had integrated the human rights-based approach into programming. The culture group, formed in May 2003, organized its first meeting in Beirut in September 2003, to initiate dialogue on culturally sensitive programming. The outcome of the meeting was the development of the UNFPA guidance note on culturally sensitive programming approaches, which will help to institutionalize a cultural perspective in UNFPA programming.

26. A project document on institutionalizing a cultural perspective in UNFPA programming was also developed to provide a road map for future action. The road map builds on a review of nine country programmes that were developed using culturally sensitive programming approaches: Brazil, Cambodia, Ghana, Guatemala, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malawi, Uganda and Yemen. These reviews include an analysis of lessons learned on UNFPA experiences, a comparative study of common success factors and constraints, and field-based inputs for developing learning curricula on cultural sensitivity.

27. At the inter-agency level, UNFPA contributed to a statement on common understanding of the human rights-based approach to development cooperation as well as to the development of the plan of action on strengthening human rights-

related United Nations action at the country level with regard to national protection systems and country teams. UNFPA contributed several reports on women's rights, reproductive rights and gender to the Commission on Human Rights. UNFPA also participated in the second session of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues held at United Nations Headquarters in May 2003, reporting on UNFPA-supported national and regional projects specifically targeted to indigenous people, especially women.

28. During 2003, UNFPA continued its support to the microcredit summit campaign, enabling it to integrate women's empowerment and reproductive health issues into its training programmes through training grants and a video. UNFPA also laid the foundation to expand partnerships by working with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and non-governmental organizations, including the microcredit summit campaign, to develop a proposal to link areas of IFAD expertise, such as microfinance, to those of UNFPA, including reproductive health education, HIV/AIDS and women's empowerment.

29. The work of UNFPA in addressing sexual and reproductive health concerns and gender-based violence in the armed forces culminated in 2003 with lessons drawn from nine country case studies (Benin, Botswana, Ecuador, Madagascar, Mongolia, Namibia, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Ukraine). The findings are contained in a CD-ROM, entitled "Enlisting the armed forces to protect reproductive health and rights: lessons from nine countries".

30. In response to General Assembly resolution 52/100, in which the General Assembly requested all bodies of the United Nations system to mainstream gender in the budget process, UNFPA organized a workshop on meeting the challenges of gender mainstreaming in the UNFPA strategic planning process. This workshop followed a UNFPA case study that examined the gender perspective in the multi-year funding framework, audit and evaluation, results-based management, and the UNFPA coding system.

31. To further its work in addressing reproductive health issues in conflict situations, UNFPA is organizing training for women's NGOs and the Ministry of Women's Affairs in Afghanistan to develop their management, media and leadership skills. As part of its commitment to preventing gender-based violence, UNFPA initiated a process to develop a comprehensive strategy and action plan for the next intercountry programme. Specialists, programme experts and UNFPA staff identified key actions and intervention strategies to address gender-based violence in UNFPA programmes.

G. Humanitarian assistance

32. In 2002 and 2003, UNFPA strengthened its ability to provide humanitarian assistance to communities in crisis, and to mainstream its capacity, and that of its partners, for emergency response at global and country levels.

33. At the field level, rapid response to emergencies includes the immediate shipment of supplies and equipment to enable pregnant women to deliver safely, and support for assessment missions. UNFPA also supports treatment, rehabilitation and counselling for traumatized women and their families in refugee camps and affected

areas through projects that address the needs of women and girls in conflict and post-conflict situations.

34. When situations stabilize, UNFPA helps lay the groundwork for transition and reconstruction -- by supporting the rehabilitation of damaged service delivery stations, training service providers and community workers, and restoring reproductive health services to promote safe motherhood, adolescent reproductive health and access to condoms. UNFPA programmes also support community reintegration for victims of war and violence, specifically for youth ex-combatants and destitute women.

35. UNFPA addresses HIV/AIDS prevention as well as sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations by deploying a six-pronged strategy that includes: HIV/AIDS prevention in the military, police, and in demobilization and peacekeeping forces; creation of a safe blood supply; the prevention of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections, and the promotion of a healthy lifestyle among vulnerable women affected by crisis; HIV/AIDS prevention among adolescent refugees and internally displaced persons; and strengthening the capacity of local NGOs.

36. At the inter-agency level, UNFPA continues to strengthen its networking and coordination role in assuring reproductive health care in emergency settings. In addition to being an active member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, UNFPA has intensified its working partnerships with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the United Nations Secretariat.

37. In 2003, UNFPA convened regional inter-agency meetings in Cape Town, South Africa, and Akosombo, Ghana, to draw attention to the reproductive health dimensions of the Southern African food crisis and to conflict-driven devastation and continual displacement of people in West Africa. The Fund also continued its participation in the United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeals Process, participating in 14 appeals in 2002 and 18 in 2003.

H. Cooperation with the World Bank

38. In 2003, cooperation between UNFPA and the World Bank continued to grow with the implementation of the joint action plan agreed between the President of the World Bank and the Executive Director of UNFPA in October 2002. The joint action plan identified areas for expanded collaboration in population, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and gender and culture by: (a) sharing experiences, lessons learned, research and publications; (b) monitoring indicators; (c) developing training modules for gender mainstreaming; (d) participating in thematic working groups; and (e) creating greater awareness of PRSPs and other policy and programming frameworks.

39. Policy dialogues in selected countries on rich-poor differences in population and reproductive health outcomes are an important component of the action plan. The purpose of the policy dialogues is to shape poverty reduction strategy formulation to reach the poorest groups. One such policy dialogue was held in Dhaka in September 2003.

I. Information technology

40. During the World Summit on the Information Society in December 2003, UNFPA and the Government of Ireland released new open source software known as the portable knowledge asset development system. UNFPA and Business Information Systems of University College, Cork, Ireland, jointly developed the software, with funding from the Government of Ireland. It is a knowledge-sharing tool used to collect, distil and synthesize lessons learned to improve results and inform policy and development strategies. The software is a CD-ROM version of the UNFPA knowledge asset development system, which is now part of an organization-wide knowledge-sharing strategy. The portable knowledge asset development system, which has been issued in English, is being distributed free of charge and will be available in French and Spanish by the end of January 2004. The Government of Jordan will produce an Arabic version.

41. UNFPA continues to manage the population and reproductive health portal in the Development Gateway (http://www.developmentgateway.org/pop). UNFPA was the first United Nations agency to create a topical web site within the Development Gateway system. In 2003, UNFPA also assisted in the creation and management of a new Development Gateway web site on capacity development for the Millennium Development Goals. The web site is jointly maintained by UNDP and the World Bank Institute, in collaboration with UNFPA, the United Nations Capital Development Fund, UNAIDS and the Millennium Project.

42. The objective of UNFPA involvement in both web sites is to create public awareness about population issues within and beyond the development community. UNFPA also uses the population and reproductive health portal to distribute information about UNFPA knowledge-sharing activities, including the development and launch of the portable knowledge asset development system software. By early December 2003, the population and reproductive health portal had almost 4,000 members; more than 1,100 are NGOs and over 61 per cent are from developing countries, primarily from sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

II. Follow-up to international conferences and the Millennium Development Goals

43. In 2003, UNFPA conducted a field inquiry, in both developed and developing countries as well as in countries with economies in transition, on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and of the key actions for its further implementation. The field inquiry aims to assess progress made in the 10 years since ICPD was held, and to identify constraints, lessons learned and best practices. UNFPA is also providing technical and financial support to developing countries and countries with economies in transition to further the national review process and identify strategies to accelerate the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

44. UNFPA has supported the regional commissions as they prepare to mark the tenth anniversary of ICPD with regional reviews, including a regional analysis of the results of the field inquiry. The emphasis is on lessons learned and on the exchange of experiences at the regional level, so that countries can identify how they can be of assistance to each other through South-South cooperation.

45. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which incorporate many ICPD goals, remained central to the work of UNFPA. UNFPA prepared a guidance note on how to report progress towards achieving the Goals and circulated it to UNFPA country offices to guide their engagement in the Millennium Development Goals process. In addition to working with United Nations country teams, UNFPA country offices also supported national efforts in Millennium Development Goals reporting, especially with respect to maternal health, gender empowerment and HIV/AIDS prevention.

46. In addition, UNFPA continued to support national capacity-building in collecting census data that is critical for reporting progress. Advocating population and housing censuses was an important part of the UNFPA effort. UNFPA also participated in the Millennium Project task forces on poverty and maternal mortality and contributed to the work of the UNDG working group on the Millennium Development Goals and related indicators.

III. Recommendation

47. **The Executive Board may wish to take note of the present report and to transmit it to the Economic and Social Council, together with the comments and guidance provided by delegations at the present session.**